

CLAIMS APPENDIX
(current wording of all pending claims)

1. (amended) A method for treating a joint formed by opposing bones having first and second mating joint surfaces so that relative slidable joint motion between the bones is permanently maintained comprising the following steps:

removing at least a portion of the first joint surface to expose a cancellous bone surface;

selecting a bioresorbable implant having a face adapted to face the cancellous bone surface;

placing the bioresorbable implant between and in contact with the second joint surface and the cancellous bone surface so that the face is opposite the cancellous bone surface and the implant initially keeps said exposed cancellous bone surface spaced apart from the second joint surface while permitting relative slidable motion between the face and the cancellous bone surface;

using the joint while resorbing the implant and causing slidable motions between the face and the cancellous bone surface; and

forming fibroblast at the cancellous bone surface while using the joint so that the fibroblast progresses into fibrocartilage as the implant is resorbed, the fibrocartilage replaces the implant during such resorption, and thereafter relative slidable motion between the bones along the fibrocartilage occurs when using the joint.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of selecting the bioresorbable implant made of a polymer of lactic acid.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the selecting step is carried out by selecting a lactic acid copolymer.

4. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
estimating the period time it will take for the fibroblast to progress into fibrocartilage; and

selecting the bioresorbable implant of a size, shape and material according to said period of time.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of ensuring the exposed cancellous bone surface and the face of the bioresorbable implant placed against said cancellous bone surface have complementary surface shapes.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the ensuring step includes the step of selecting curved surface shapes as said complementary surface shapes.

8. (amended) A method for treating a substantially non-weight bearing arthritic joint having first and second mating joint surfaces so that relative slidable joint motion between the bones is permanently maintained comprising the following steps:

removing at least a portion of the first and second joint surfaces to expose first and second cancellous bone surfaces;

selecting a bioresorbable implant having first and second implant faces corresponding to the first and second cancellous bone surfaces;

placing the first and second implant faces of the bioresorbable implant between and against the first and second exposed cancellous bone surfaces so as to permit relative slidable motion between the first and second faces and the first and second cancellous surfaces;

using the joint and causing slidable motions between the face and the first cancellous surfaces; and

while using the joint forming fibrocartilage at each said cancellous bone surface as the implant is resorbed to thereby replace the implant during such resorption and enable slidable motion between the bones along the formed fibrocartilage.

9. (amended) The method of claim 8 wherein the selecting step is carried out by selecting said bioresorbable implant having a generally semi-spherically shaped surface as the first implant surface.

10. The method of claim 8 further comprising the steps of:
estimating the period of time it will take for the fibroblast to progress into fibrocartilage; and

selecting the bioresorbable implant of a size and material according to said period of time.

24. (five times amended) A method for treating at least one degenerated surface on a cancellous bone, the cancellous surface being one of first and second relatively slidably movable surfaces defining a body joint, so that slidable joint motion between the bones is permanently maintained, the method comprising the steps of resecting the bone to form the at least one degenerated cancellous bone surface, placing a bioresorbable implant between the at least one degenerated cancellous bone surface and the second surface to thereby space the surfaces apart, providing the implant with at least one face which is opposite and shaped complementary to at least one degenerated cancellous bone surface so that the implant can slidably move relative to the at least one degenerated cancellous bone surface, allowing the face to slidably move relative to the at least one degenerated cancellous bone surface, permitting growth of fibroblast on the at least one cancellous surface and conversion of the fibroblast into fibrocartilage during the allowing step, maintaining a spacing between the body joint defining surfaces during the permitting steps, and waiting for the body to gradually resorb the implant during the allowing and permitting steps so that, upon resorption of the implant, the fibrocartilage forms at least one of the body joint defining surfaces and slidable motion between the bones along the fibrocartilage occurs.

25. (thrice amended) A method for treating a joint having first and second mating joint surfaces so that slidable joint motion between the bones is permanently maintained comprising the following steps:

removing at least a portion of the first joint surface to generate an exposed cancellous bone surface;

placing a bioresorbable implant between and in contact with the exposed cancellous bone surface and the second joint surface so the implant initially keeps said exposed cancellous bone surface spaced apart from the second joint surface;

providing the implant with a face which is opposite the exposed cancellous bone surface;

permitting relative slidable motion between the face and the exposed cancellous bone surface;

using the joint while resorbing the implant and slidably moving the face relative to the exposed cancellous bone surface;

forming fibroblast which progresses into fibrocartilage while using the joint as the implant is resorbed and continuing to slidably move the face relative to the exposed cancellous bone surface;

following the resorption of the implant continuing to slidably move the second surface along the formed fibrocartilage;

estimating the period of time it will take for the fibroblast to progress into fibrocartilage; and

selecting the bioresorbable implant of a size, shape and material according to said period of time.

26. (thrice amended) A method for treating a joint having first and second mating joint surfaces carried by cancellous bone so that slidable joint motion between the bones is permanently maintained comprising the following steps:

removing at least a portion of the first joint surface to expose a cancellous bone surface;

forming a cavity into the medullary canal of the cancellous bone carrying the second joint surface;

selecting a bioresorbable implant configured to fit between the cancellous bone surface and the second joint surface, the implant having a face, a backside and a stem portion extending from the backside and configured to fit within said cavity;

inserting the stem portion into the cavity and placing the bioresorbable implant between the cancellous bone surface and the second joint surface so the implant initially keeps said surfaces spaced apart and the face is slidably movable relative to the cancellous bone surface;

using the joint while resorbing the implant, including slidably moving the face relative to the cancellous bone surface; and

forming fibroblast which progresses into fibrocartilage while using the joint as the implant is resorbed to replace the implant and maintain relative slidable motion between the bones along the fibrocartilage.

27. A method according to claim 1 including permitting slidable motion between the face and the first joint surface in a lateral direction.

28. A method according to claim 8 including placing the first and second implant surfaces so as to permit relative slidable motion between the first and second faces and the first and second joint surfaces in a lateral direction.

29. A method according to claim 24 including allowing the face to move relative to the at least one of the first and second surfaces in a lateral direction.

30. A method according to claim 25 including permitting relative slidable motion between the face and the first surface in a lateral direction.

31. A method according to claim 26 including permitting the face to slidably move relative to the first joint surface in a lateral direction.